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C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 000869

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KJUS](#) [KTIP](#) [SNAR](#) [KCRM](#) [AR](#)
SUBJECT: ARGENTINA: JEWISH COMMUNITY STILL SEEKS JUSTICE 15
YEARS AFTER AMIA TERRORIST ATTACK; FORMER PROSECUTOR FACES
NEW THREATS

REF: A. BUENOS AIRES 0286
[B](#). BUENOS AIRES 0631
[C](#). BUENOS AIRES 0831

Classified By: CDA Alexander A. Featherstone for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#). (C) Summary: The Argentine Jewish community commemorated the fifteenth anniversary of the terrorist attack on the Argentine Jewish Mutual Association (AMIA) with a small, informal gathering on July 18. The CDA attended the gathering, as did Chief Cabinet Minister Anibal Fernandez, who afterwards told the press that the government would not "give up" its efforts to bring to justice those responsible for the attack. Local media and some victims' advocacy groups, however, criticized the government for tolerating impunity and decried the fact that not a single person has been convicted for the attack which left 85 dead, and hundreds more wounded. AMIA postponed to August 18 its annual, large-scale official ceremony as a cautionary measure against Argentina's H1N1 flu outbreak.

[2](#). (C) In a separate incident, Claudio Lifschitz, a former AMIA investigator-turned-whistleblower escaped unharmed from the bullets of an unknown assailant. He claims that the government's intelligence agency (SIDE) orchestrated this incident, along with his March kidnapping (ref A), in an effort to silence his vocal criticism of the government's handling of the AMIA case. The press also reported on Lifschitz's own links to criminal elements, which raises the possibility that the attacks on Lifschitz may have sprung from his association with criminal elements. End Summary.

Official Ceremony Postponed but Families Still Gather

[3](#). (C) On July 18, family and friends of victims marked the fifteenth anniversary of the 1994 terrorist attack on the Argentine-Jewish Mutual Association (AMIA) in central Buenos Aires with an unofficial and smaller-than-usual gathering outside the former site of the AMIA headquarters. Due to the H1N1 flu epidemic, as well as the fact that the anniversary fell on the Sabbath, AMIA had postponed to August 18 the official, annual, large-scale commemoration ceremony. The CDA attended the July 18 event as did Chief Cabinet Minister Anibal Fernandez, who afterwards told the press that the government would not "give up" in bringing to justice those responsible for the attack.

AMIA case is GOA "Debt to Society"

¶4. (SBU) Newly-appointed Minister of Justice Julio Alak said that bringing to justice the perpetrators of the attack was a "large debt owed to Argentine society." He added that "many challenges remain; fundamentally, we need to help Interpol to detain those responsible...and we must press Iran to identify those responsible so that they can be tried." In contrast, AMIA investigative judge Rodolfo Canicoba Corral acknowledges that progress has been "slow and complicated" because extradition of the international suspects "depends on international policies that are out of the hands of Argentina's judicial system and government."

Victims Group Holds Alternative Ceremony

¶5. (C) Despite GOA efforts to extradite the international suspects and reopen an investigation into the so-called "local connection" (ref B), not a single person has been convicted for the attack, which left 85 dead and hundreds more wounded. As a result, many victims' family members have reproached the government for the attack's impunity. In a July 17 commemoration ceremony, leaders of the radical advocacy organization "The Association Seeking to Shed Light on the Impunity in the AMIA Massacre" (APEMIA) denounced the GOA for not doing more to bring to justice the perpetrators of the attack. During the event, APEMIA founder Laura Ginsberg said, "The worst pandemic is impunity...We denounce (President) Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner's efforts to organize...an international campaign to close the AMIA investigation with the objective of exonerating the Argentine state from criminal responsibility. For years, we have

maintained that this was a crime covered up by the state, and for this reason those responsible should be brought to justice."

Press Reaction

¶6. (SBU) Under the title "AMIA: 15 years of Impunity," paper of record "La Nacion's" lead editorial on July 17 criticized the government for the lack of progress in investigating and clarifying the 1994 AMIA attack as well as the 1992 bombing that leveled the Israeli Embassy and killed 29 persons. "In 15 years, Argentina's judicial system has not completed its double mission of uncovering the truth of what happened and punishing everyone who is guilty," it said. Judicial inaction and tolerance for impunity has made Argentina even more vulnerable to terrorism, it argued, as would-be terrorists will view the country as a safe-haven in which they can operate without fear of being caught and brought before justice. The editorial called on the Argentine government to redouble its efforts to investigate the "local connection" in the case, including looking into the alleged irregularities committed by government officials in former President Carlos Menem's administration. In addition, it urged federal judge Canicoba Corral to launch an investigation into the kidnapping of former AMIA investigator-turned-whistleblower Claudio Lifschitz. (Note: As reported in ref A, Lifschitz claimed last March that he was kidnapped, tortured, and threatened by men who identified themselves as SIDE agents.)

Former AMIA Investigator Faces New Threats?

¶7. (SBU) Lifschitz now claims to have been the target of an assassination attempt on July 18. He told the press that at 2:40 in the morning, an unknown assailant fired three unsuccessful shots at him as he and his federal police bodyguard were driving in the Buenos Aires suburb of Merlo. He credits the bodyguard for saving his life by pulling him down and returning fire, which prompted the assailant to flee the scene. Lifschitz and his bodyguard immediately went to the police station to file a report in which police officers classified the incident as an attempted murder.

Ties to Criminal Activity?

18. (SBU) Although Lifschitz blames Argentina's intelligence agency, SIDE, for the incident, others speculate that his possible connections to narcotrafficking and prostitution rings led to the attack. Local daily "Clarín" reported that Lifschitz's ex-wife said he was an associate of former SIDE agent Raul Luis Martins, who reportedly has been indicted on prostitution and related charges in Mexico for owning cabarets in Cancun, Mexico. (Ref C referred to a "Raul Martes", who is reportedly an ex-SIDE official involved in trafficking Argentine women to Mexico. "Raul Luis Martins" appears to be the same man. Martins reportedly also owns nightclubs in Buenos Aires.) Although press reports indicate that Lifschitz provided legal counsel to Martins, Lifschitz denies that he is involved in any criminal activity and claims that his ex-wife has been "manipulated by intelligence officials." Lifschitz maintains that these incidents have been orchestrated by the government and SIDE in an effort to silence him, as he has been and continues to be a vocal critic of the government's handling of this case.

19. (C) Comment: For many, the 15th anniversary of the AMIA bombing marks another year of judicial impunity and demonstrates the deep flaws in Argentina's judicial system. Most Argentines already doubt the effectiveness of their judicial system, and the court's inability to convict a single person in the deadliest terrorist attack on Argentine soil reinforces the perception that politics will always trump justice. The bulk of evidence points to Iranians who masterminded and perpetrated the attack, and they are far removed from the reach of Argentine authorities. Many of the victims' families contend, however, that more could be done to clarify the attack and illuminate the role of the attackers' local Argentine connections.

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